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Farm Broadcasters Letter

United States Department of Agriculture Office of Public Affairs Radio-TV Division Washington D.C. 20250 (202) 720-4330

Letter No. 2553

April 10, 1992

FARMERS SAY BIG GAINERS in planted acres this year will be spring wheat, whose plantings will be up 10.5 percent from last year, grain sorghum up 10 percent, rice up 4.8 percent, and corn up 4 percent. Big losers are flaxseed which will have 30 percent fewer acres, durum wheat which will be down 22 percent, dry edible beans off 21.5 percent, and sunflowers, off 19.6 percent. In acres planted, the biggest increases are expected in corn -- 3 million more acres this year, spring wheat -- 1.6 million more acres, and grain sorghum -- up 1 million acres. The largest reduction in acres planted will be in soybeans with 1.6 million fewer acres than last year, durum wheat off 718,000 acres, cotton down 655,000 acres, sunflowers down 538,000 acres and dry edible beans down 410,500 acres. **Contact: John Witzig** (202) 720-2127.

FOOD PRICES IN 1991 ROSE MORE SLOWLY at supermarkets and other grocery stores than at eating places, reversing a trend during the previous four years. Food prices in 1991, according to the Consumer Price Index, averaged 2.9 percent above those in 1990, half the 1990 price increase of 5.8 percent. Moreover, the 1991 increase was the lowest since 1985. There were two principle reasons for the slowdown, USDA economists say. Production of livestock increased, generating record meat supplies. At the same time, the recession cut into consumer buying power and thus, food spending. Per capita disposable income, adjusted for inflation, fell about 1 percent in 1991. **Contact: Denis Dunham** (202) 219-0870.

FUTURE GROWTH AND WELL-BEING for U.S. agriculture depend very heavily on global export markets. We need growth in those markets, access to them and fair competition, Under Secretary **Richard Crowder** told the House Committee on Agriculture recently as he reviewed progress in the six-year-old GATT Uruguay Round negotiations. The Dunkel text contains some "significant disappointments" for the United States, "but we believe it provides a framework to conclude an agreement that takes an important step toward freer and fairer trade in agriculture," Crowder said. "One of our prime objectives is to convince those few participants who are delaying the process that any significant retreat from the Dunkel text is unacceptable to the United States." **Contact: Roger Runningen** (202) 720-4623.

ETHICS OF ANIMAL AG -- The future course of animal agriculture may be determined more by the ethics of animal use than by technology, USDA economist **Gene Wunderlich** says. "Ethical issues are a crucial factor for the livestock industry today," Wunderlich says. "Sometimes people with professional or economic interests in animal agriculture belittle ethical issues as unscientific or irrational." **Contact: Gene Wunderlich** (202) 219-0427.

ONCE IN A CENTURY OPPORTUNITY -- President **George Bush** has announced a multilateral financial assistance package for Russia and the other new states of the former Soviet Union to help transform their economies to free market systems. Calling this a "once in a century opportunity" to help freedom take root and flourish there, a White House statement said success there in democracy and open markets will "directly enhance our national security" and the "growth of freedom there will create business and investment opportunities for Americans and multiply the opportunities for friendship between our peoples." **Contact: Roger Runningen** (202) 720-4623.

NO-TILL RICE offers a headstart on planting and profits, says **Roy J. Smith, Jr.**, a USDA agronomist. In three years of field work at Stuttgart, Ark., rice yields were just as high when the fields were barely cultivated before planting as they are with the conventional practice of plowing weeds into oblivion, Smith says. More significantly, net returns were as much as \$100 higher per acre on no-till rice because production expenses such as fuel for equipment were lower, he says. **Contact: Roy J. Smith, Jr.** (501) 673-2661.

MEETING ON FOREIGN DISEASES SET -- The Secretary of Agriculture's Advisory Committee on Foreign Animal and Poultry Diseases will hold a public meeting June 2 to 4 at the Holiday Inn Beachside, Key West, Fla. Discussion topics include: regionalization and risk assessment in international trade; action plans for emergency preparedness and mock exercises; user fees and trade restrictions. The committee advises Secretary of Agriculture **Edward Madigan** on actions to take to prevent the entry and establishment of foreign livestock diseases. **Contact: Alan Zagier** (301) 436-7255.

BUILDING A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP WITH FOOD starts at an early age, says **Beth Reames**, extension nutritionist with the Louisiana State University Agricultural Center. "Many of our earliest, most memorable occasions center around food," she says. Most people don't realize how strongly food is tied to their feelings. "Overeating is often an attempt to satisfy our emotional hunger for love and affection," she says. Helping children build healthy relationships with food at an early age is one of the most important things we can do for them, Reames says. She has tips for how to help build this healthy relationship. **Contact: Beth Reames** (504) 388-4141.

RUSSIAN FORAGE LOOKS GOOD -- A new variety of Russian wild rye could give U.S. farmers a more economical forage choice for the cooler spring months before summer grasses emerge, USDA agronomist **Daniel P. Mowrey** says. Russian wild rye may save soil as well as money, Mowrey says, because the land isn't cultivated as often with a perennial. **Contact: Daniel P. Mowrey** (405) 262-5291.

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FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

AGRICULTURE USA #1818 -- On this edition of **Agriculture USA**, **Brenda Curtis** conjures up visions of the Old West and replaces them with images of the New West that include rancher **Peggy Monzingo**. We'll hear about **Peggy Monzingo's** life on the ranch. (Weekly reel -- 13-1/2 minute documentary.)

CONSUMER TIME #1300 -- Preventative health care; got a nutrition question; meat bargains this year; testing soil for lead; the rural job situation. (Weekly reel of 2-1/2 to 3 minute consumer features.)

AGRITAPE NEWS & FEATURES #1809 -- USDA News Highlights; the 1992 wheat ARP; the grazing fee controversy; streamlining USDA; crop insurance. (Weekly reel of news features.)

NEWS FEATURE FIVE #1515 -- Blue lettuce; breeding better lettuce; lots of lettuce; armyworm biocontrol; improving viral insecticides. (Weekly reel of research feature stories.)

UPCOMING ON USDA RADIO NEWSLINE -- Mon., April 20, ag outlook, U.S. ag trade update; Tues., April 21, crop/weather update, dairy outlook, ag resources; Wed., April 22, catfish, rice outlook; Thurs., April 23, oil crops outlook; Fri., April 24, cattle on feed, livestock/poultry update. **(These are the USDA reports we know about in advance. Our Newsline carries many stories every day which are not listed in this lineup. Please don't let the lack of a story listing keep you from calling.)**

DIAL THE USDA RADIO NEWSLINES (202) 488-8358 or 8359.

Material changed at 5 p.m., EDT, each working day.

FROM OUR TELEVISION NEWS SERVICE

FEATURES -- **Lynn Wyvill** reports on Secretary of Agriculture **Edward Madigan's** plan to improve USDA management and **Pat O'Leary** reports on turning old tires into cattle troughs.

ACTUALITIES -- USDA meteorologist **Norton Strommen** on the latest weather and crop developments; USDA economist **Ron Gustafson** on the outlook for holiday meat supplies and prices, and USDA economist **David Harvey** on catfish supplies and prices.

UPCOMING FEATURES -- **Lynn Wyvill** reports on food safety tips for people at risk for foodborne illness; **DeBoria Janifer** reports on eradicating brucellosis and **Pat O'Leary** reports on the secrets of soil and earthworms in agriculture.

EVERY OTHER WEEK -- **Agriculture Update**, five minutes of USDA farm program information in "news desk" format with B-roll.

Available on Satellite Galaxy 6, Transponder 12D (Channel 23), audio 6.2 or 6.8: Thursdays from 7:30 - 7:45 p.m., EDT, Saturdays from 10 - 10:45 a.m., EDT, and Mondays from 8 - 8:45 a.m., EDT.

OFFMIKE

MILD WINTER...has wheat producers concerned, says **Rex Childs** (KFDI, Wichita, Kan.). There are indications that wheat rust has remained in the region. Varieties that are especially susceptible could be hard hit this spring, particularly in the western portions of the state. Rex says another concern is the insect population that over-wintered. Alfalfa could be at risk.

PROBLEMS OF RURAL AMERICA...were addressed in a conference on Agricultural and Rural Outlook for Northeast Missouri, held in Hannibal. Among the topics discussed, says **David Lee** (KHMO, Hannibal, Mo.), were economic problems confronting rural citizens, including the decline in jobs, and educational opportunities. Former Secretary of Agriculture **Bob Bergland** was the featured speaker.

FARM SHOW...in Green Bay, Wisc., had good attendance, says **Michael Austin** (WDEZ/WGEE, Green Bay). The show emphasized the materials handling aspects of dairy production. Michael broadcast live from the show.

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MOVED...**Brian Baxter** from Morning Ag Report, Indianapolis, Ind., to his own video production company, Baxter Communications, Indianapolis. ...**Monty Beal** (KWPC, Muscatine, Iowa) has left the broadcasting business. KWPC has reduced its agricultural programming.

CONGRATULATIONS...to **Gene Ragan** (WTVY-TV, Dothan, Ala.). April marks his 34th year in farm broadcasting at the station. Gene has served 38 years on farm radio.

FARMING...is a dangerous occupation, second only to mining. The National Safety Council says unsafe use of tractors and machinery account for the majority of 1,300 deaths and 120,000 disabling injuries suffered by farmers each year. The field work season is moving north. Ask your listeners to apply extra safety to operations this year.

VIC POWELL
Chief, Radio and TV Division